



# Flathead National Forest Plan Revision Stakeholder Collaboration Process Proposal

*August 30, 2013*

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## Introduction

This updated stakeholder collaboration process proposal has been prepared by Meridian Institute, taking into account input from stakeholder interviews and the Flathead National Forest (FNF). The overall intent is to provide a transparent, open, and fair process that provides multiple avenues for stakeholders to engage in the collaborative process, but that does not contribute to “meeting fatigue” or place unrealistic expectations on FNF staff.

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## Seek Process Advice from Interested Stakeholders

Meridian has already benefited from stakeholder input about the collaborative process – input that is reflected in this proposed process document. Once the process plan is finalized we will seek continuous feedback as the process is implemented, and will make adjustments as necessary.

### Purpose

The reason for seeking process advice from interested stakeholders is because they are the ones who need to be engaged. Stakeholders are in the best position to tell us whether the proposed process plan is going to meet their needs, and once the process is underway whether it is working as intended.

### Process Workshop

There will be a “Process Workshop” on September 25, 2013 to share the input that has been received so far on the process proposal and to engage interested stakeholders in further discussion about how to incorporate that input, address any concerns, and move towards a final process plan that will meet stakeholder and FNF interests and needs. The Workshop is open to any interested stakeholders (RSVP requested for planning purposes to [lduxbury@merid.org](mailto:lduxbury@merid.org)). One of the desired outcomes for the process workshop is the establishment of a Process Advisory Group.

### Role of the Process Advisory Group

The Process Advisory Group’s role will be to provide on-going advice to Meridian and the FNF about the collaboration process, not about the substance of the FNF Plan revision.

Example of topics the Process Advisory Group might address include:

- Number and timing of collaboration meetings and calls.
- Ground rules - How are the ground-rules for the collaboration process and meetings working, what if groundrules should be modified? Any new ones needed?
- Getting the word out about the collaboration – Are we reaching everyone we need to, including typically hard-to reach communities (e.g., minority, disabled, disadvantaged, non-resident land-owners, etc.)? What can be done to broaden our reach?
- E-collaboration – how are the E-collaboration mechanisms working? Are there suggestions for improvement?
- What else in the collaboration is working well, not so well, and are there suggested modifications to improve the process?

### **Participation in the Process Advisory Group**

- We are seeking a diversity of participants (up to 10) who are willing to dedicate the time (estimated at 2-4 hours/month) and who have an interest in the process. We would like to include someone with interest/expertise in E-collaboration.
- Meridian will reach out individually to a few stakeholders who expressed interest about the collaborative process during the initial interviews and ask if they might be willing to participate in the Process Advisory Group. Ideally we would have those individuals at the Process Workshop
- If necessary, we will seek additional Process Advisory Group members at the Process Workshop – e.g., other people who could help ensure adequate diversity and who are interested.

### **Format for the Process Advisory Group**

- Initial two hour call following the Process Workshop to work on first set of issues/questions (e.g., ones that came up during the Process workshop).
- Hour long call once a month to address any process issues / questions that arise as the collaboration plan is implemented.
- Willingness to respond to occasional emails on issues /questions that come up between regularly scheduled calls.
- Summaries of any Process Advisory Group meetings or calls will be posted within a week.

### **Additional Ways for Stakeholders to Provide Feedback about the Collaboration Process**

- Every meeting in the collaborative process will include an agenda item to debrief that particular event and to ask for feedback on how the overall process is going (e.g., what is working well, what needs to be adjusted, suggestions).

- The E-collaboration component of the process will include a way for stakeholders to provide feedback and suggestions about process, as well as about substantive issues.
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## Assessment

### Purpose

The purpose of the Forest Plan Assessment is to inform the identification of “Need for Change” in the Forest Plan and ultimately the Plan Components to be included in the Draft Proposed Forest Management Plan. One of the first steps in the FNF planning process is to share information and gather stakeholder input about the Forest Plan Assessment through a series of field trips and discussions with interested stakeholders. The information shared and feedback received will be used to develop and finalize the Assessment.

### Topics

The FNF will begin its public engagement, focusing on field trips throughout the Forest discussing topical areas that are at the heart of the Forest Plan and that have historically generated the most interest and controversy among stakeholders:

- Recreation settings, opportunities and access, and scenic character
- Forest vegetation and disturbances including fire, timber harvest and forest products
- Terrestrial and aquatic habitats and threatened and endangered species and species of conservation concern, and invasive species
- IRA, recommended wilderness, and wild and scenic rivers

Social Economics and the distinctive roles and contributions of the FNF that taken together with assessment findings determine the need for change, will be a component of each topic above.

### Field Trips

Field trips are taking place during August and September 2013 on the topics listed above. The trips are designed to give attendees an opportunity to relate the topics to some of the actual places likely to be of interest in the Forest Plan, and to begin sharing information relevant for the Plan Assessment. The field trips are open to anyone wanting to attend, with a request that attendees register ahead of time to allow for logistics preparation. Dates and locations for the field trips are as follows:

- **August 8** - Forest vegetation and disturbances including fire, timber harvest and forest products - **at Tally Lake**
- **August 29** - Recreation settings opportunities and access, and scenic character - **on the Hungry Horse/Spotted Bear River District**

- **September 12** - Terrestrial and aquatic habitats and threatened and endangered species and species of conservation concern, and invasive species - **on the Swan Lake District**
  - **September 26** - IRA, recommended wilderness, and wild and scenic rivers - **on the Glacier View District**
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## Stakeholder Collaboration

### Purposes

The purposes of the collaboration process are to provide stakeholders with information about the FNF Plan revision, a way to comment on the substantive issues covered in the FNF Plan, and ways to participate in collaborative discussions about the most controversial topics and to engage in collective problem solving about how to develop recommendations that address multiple interests.

### Activities

The proposed stakeholder collaboration process includes the following proposed elements:

- 1) An initial Process Orientation Meeting – in October (date TBD). The orientation meeting will include:
  - “Forest Planning 101”, which will provide an overview of forest planning, the anticipated FNF Plan Revision schedule, the role of stakeholders, etc.
  - An orientation to the suggested collaboration and stakeholder engagement process, expected time commitment to join a topical work group, etc.
  - Presentation / discussion about how to succeed in collaborative deliberations.
  - Defining and “signing up” for the topical work groups - tentatively mirroring the topics discussed at the field trips as input to the Assessment
  - Initial organizational session for each topical work group to discuss schedule going forward, information needs from the FNF, etc.
- 2) Topical Work Groups that will meet on as needed basis between approximately November 2013 and June 2014 – on schedule to be determined by each work group (could be bi-weekly to monthly) to work through issues, develop tentative recommendations about Need for Change and Forest Plan Direction.
  - Each work group will be open to anyone, but with an expected core set of participants for continuity purposes
  - Likely to meet at least partly by phone given geographic dispersion
  - Each group will have an assigned Meridian Institute facilitator to provide facilitation, note-taking and other support

- 3) “Plenary” meetings that will be conducted periodically to bring together all the topical work groups and other interested stakeholders
  - The tentative expectation is to conduct two plenaries after the initial orientation meeting – probably in January and June 2014
  - Open to anyone (including anyone interested in attending even if they are not a member of a topical work group)
  - Work group products shared and feedback provided
  - Level of support / agreement / disagreement assessed
  - Additional “charges” given by plenary to each work group
  - New work groups formed as necessary (and ones that are finished are disbanded)
- 4) Inter-agency group
  - Convene early in the process to provide initial input on key issues, questions, concerns, suggestions; mid-way for a check-in on progress; and at the end to hear summary of progress, review next steps in the planning process etc.
  - Expected to hold meetings in conjunction with other meetings, e.g. the initial orientation meeting and the two plenary meetings
  - Also leave open the option of having any interested agency representatives attend work group meetings
- 5) Additional Outreach and E-Collaboration
  - Extensive outreach and variety of mechanisms to support participation by regional and national interests as well as by typically under-represented populations, and people who may not choose to attend work group or plenary meetings, but want their voices heard
  - Public meetings to report results of work group deliberations and seek feedback

**Timeline**

Oct-June 2014: collaborate on proposed need for change and proposed Forest Plan direction to be included in proposed plan.

Spring 2015: DEIS

Spring 2016: FEIS

Fall 2016: ROD